

Brackwalks



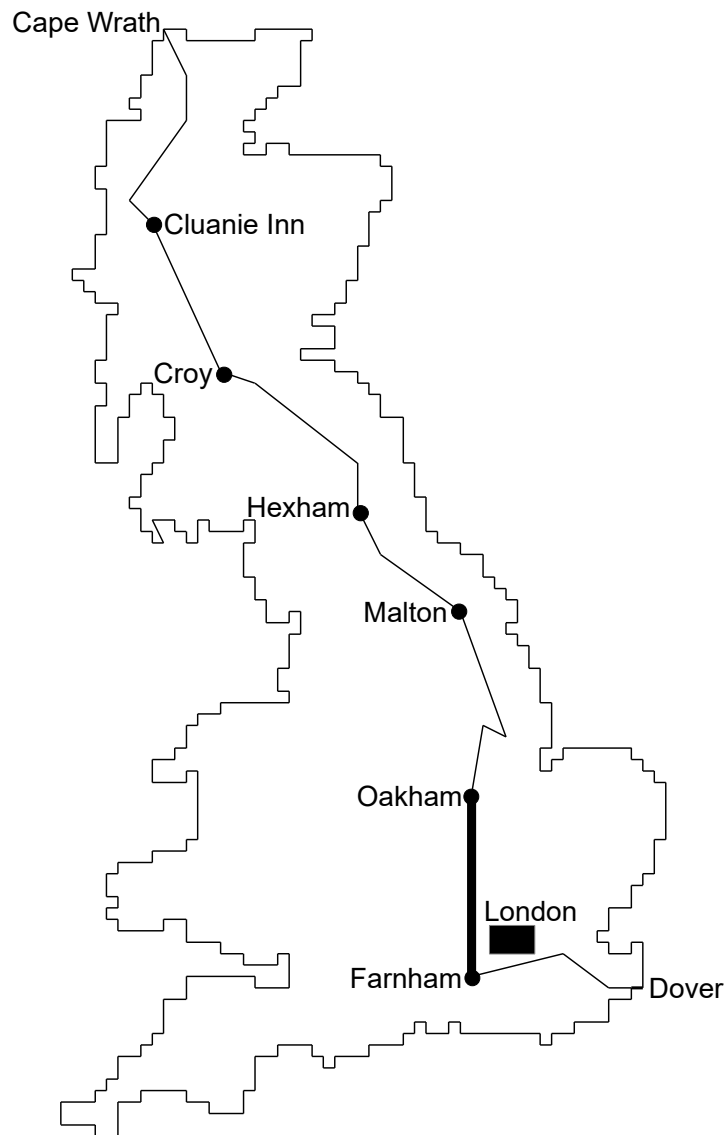
From FORELAND to CAPE

- an end to end walk across Britain from
South Foreland (Dover) to Cape Wrath

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Disclaimer: All details are given in good faith. However no activity can be completely hazard-free so undertaking any part of this route is done entirely at your own risk and I accept no responsibility for errors, loss or injury however caused.

Part 2 Farnham to Oakham (171.9miles)

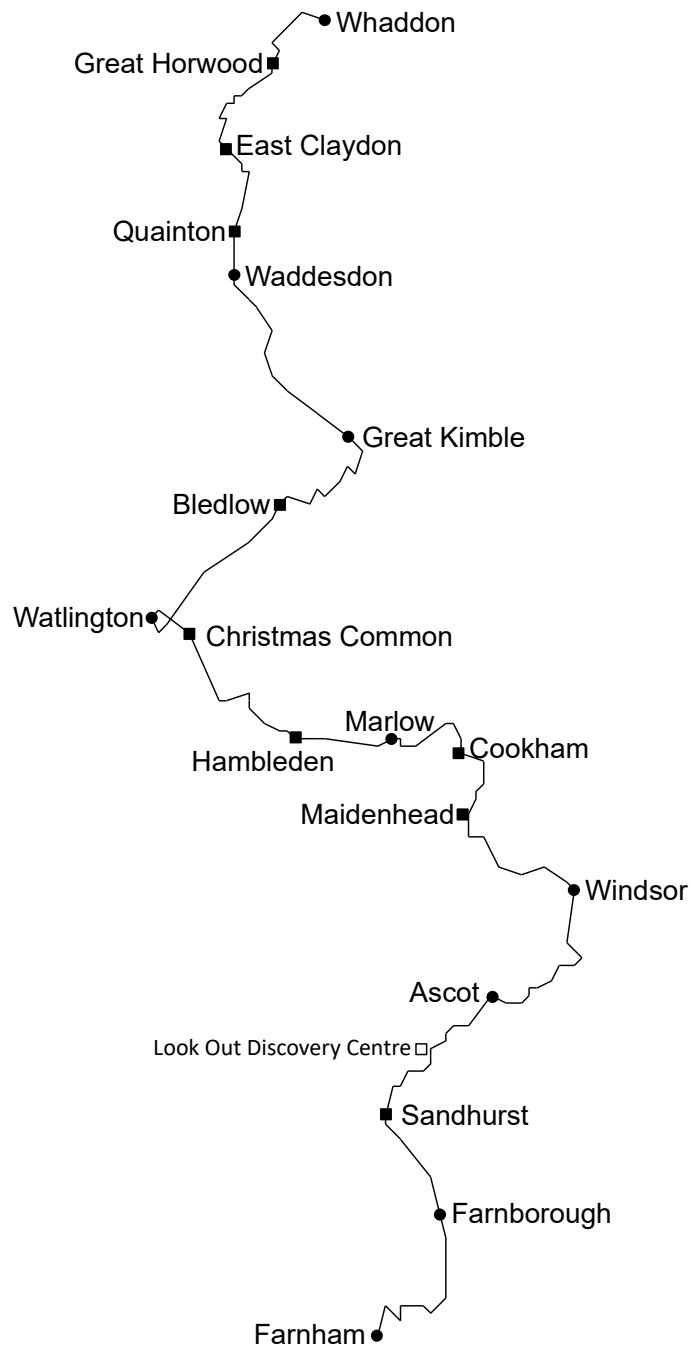


There's a complete change in terrain as the route moves northwards from Farnham. Instead of the many ups and downs of the NDW, the ground is distinctly more level and remains so until the Chiltern Hills are reached after Marlow. However beyond this chalk escarpment, there are few noticeable gradients before Oakham.

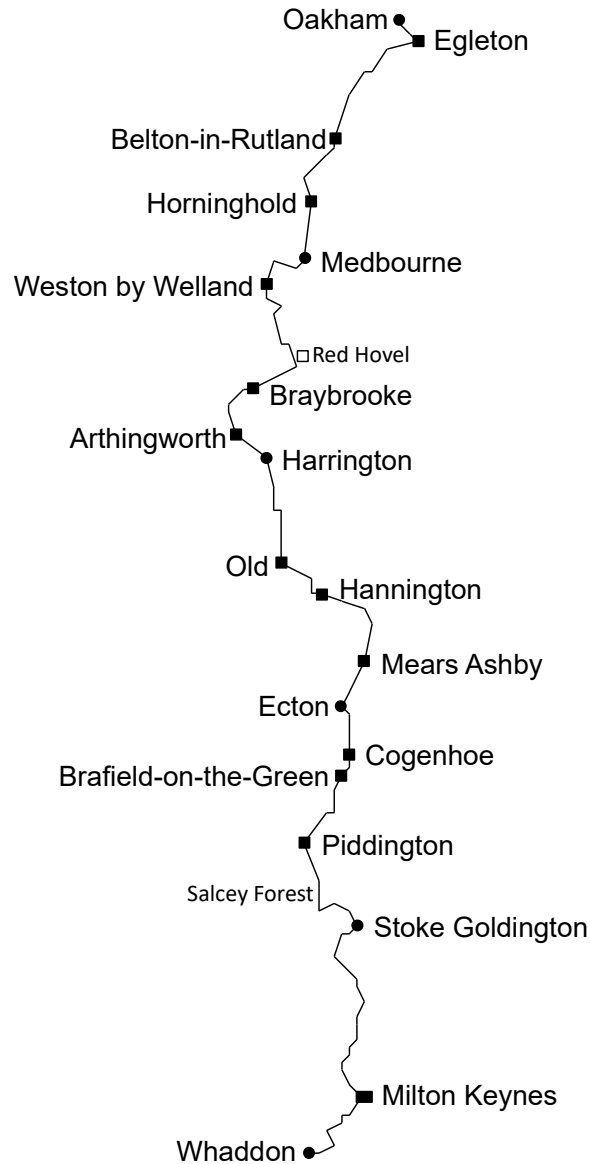
Although any path/bridleway marked on the maps can be used, the emphasis in the route planning of this section was to use appropriate parts of designated paths marked with a diamond symbol on the Explorer and Landranger maps; these denote recreational paths or national trails and are normally maintained to a reasonable standard (although this is not always the case) and usually exhibit the best features of the local landscape. The 'diamond' trails selected were then linked with other paths, bridleways and lanes shown on the map. This worked well up to Milton Keynes with the Blackwater Valley Path, Three Castles Path, Thames Path, Shakespeare Way, Oxfordshire Way, Ridgeway, Aylesbury Ring and the North Bucks Way used to reach Milton Keynes.

Milton Keynes is the only town of any size on this part of the route and its dedicated cycle tracks and pathways make it feel non-urban and smaller than it is. Beyond Milton Keynes, there are less recreational trails that can be used. Thus one might expect footpath problems. However, our experience was of footpaths and bridleways maintained to a high standard with clear (and helpful) signing. This has resulted in paths that are well walked and the appropriate authorities are to be congratulated on their work.

North of Milton Keynes the route choice is largely determined on whether to pass the very large town of Northampton to its west or east. In the end, an eastern route was adopted (having failed to secure accommodation on its western side). This enables the route to make its way almost due north to Belton-in-Rutland before turning north-east for the final few miles into Oakham; this is all mainly farmland. The route from Milton Keynes avoids all large towns, so as well as 'missing' Northampton, it stays west of Wellingborough, Kettering, Corby, and east of Market Harborough. The route does however go through numerous small villages; those in Northamptonshire are particularly attractive with their thatched cottages.



Farnham to Whaddon



Whaddon to Oakham

Stage 12: Farnham to Farnborough 9miles, ascent 203metres (660ft), descent 203metres (660ft). Explorer 145 (Guildford); Landranger 186 (Guildford).

Farnham's town centre is a short walk away from the end of the North Downs Way and from here the Blackwater Valley Path (BVP) is reached by heading through large, historic Farnham Park; this was originally a medieval deer park used by the royalty of the day and Tennyson described the parkland as 'delicious' after a visit in the 1850's. The BVP is well signed by a duck in reeds and follows Blackwater River from its source. This stage joins the BVP near its start when the river seems insignificant; however it gets increasingly substantial as the Path progresses. This is easy walking on a path with a good foundation. Although sometimes conscious of a nearby dual carriageway, the route is surprisingly

pleasant with the valley and river clearly a thriving haven for wildlife and flowers. Once joined, the BVP is followed all the way to the stage end at Farnborough, chosen as it has nearby accommodation and an eating place.

Route: From the end of NDW turn right, cross the A31 and walk up South Street ahead. Keep going until you can turn left into The Borough (street) which is Farnham's main shopping area. Turn first right up Castle Street, and first right into Park Row. Where Bear Lane on the right meets Park Row, turn left on a surfaced track signed to Farnham Park. On entering the Park, follow the tarmac path half-right and keep on this (long) path until it passes under pylons and reaches houses on the far side of the park. Turn right on a tarmac path along the backs of the houses for 0.3mile to a board about the park and exit (left) onto a dirt track, Oast House Lane (SU 846 484). Shortly reach a road T-junction and turn right to meet a main road.

Turn right to a road junction and go straight across onto a surfaced road for walkers and cyclists. On reaching a road junction, go straight across. The intention had been to shortly take the footpath off left round the back of the sports centre to Green Lane but at the time this stage was walked, the path was closed for building work. So, in this case continue down Monkton Lane to meet a more major road. Turn left, continue to a left curve and immediately after it, turn left into Green Lane; the lane becomes a dirt track after passing Green Farm. Continue up Green Lane to a T-junction. Here, turn right on Lower Weybourne Lane, pass under a railway bridge and about 280metres beyond look for a footpath sign half-left (3.7miles); this is the Blackwater Valley Path (BVP).

Follow the behind-houses path and when it emerges on a road, go left briefly, cross the water (the river here resembles a ditch) and immediately turn right as directed on a tarmac path. The path closely follows the river and having reached the south-east edge of Aldershot starts turning northwards. Later, when a lane is met, the river is crossed with the Path resuming along the river's east bank. Further on, the path exits onto a lane with a busy main road (the A323) just ahead. Turn right briefly on the main road to cross it where indicated by the signs. Once across, turn right on the pavement for a couple of metres then turn off left on a tarmac track to enter the next section of the BVP along the east side of the river. Shortly after passing a recreation ground on the west side, the path crosses the river for a short time before returning to the east side.

After passing under the Basingstoke Canal, the Path turns left ascending to the canal towpath then turns left on it to cross the A331 dual carriageway. Over, look for a left turn off to descend into Lakeside Park. After passing between lakes, the path turns left to return to and follow the Blackwater River. The river is crossed just before emerging on Lakeside Drive (road) The Path continues opposite left, quickly crosses to the east side and then closely follows the river. On approaching Hollybush Pits, the Path crosses the river and shortly beyond the Path turns left away from the river to meet Hollybush Lane; if walkers are now permitted to follow the river to meet Hollybush Lane further up then do so. Turn right and follow the lane out to meet a road.

Turn right (towards North Camp railway station), cross the river and immediately turn left on a tarmac path. Almost straight away go through an underpass and beyond emerge on a lane (Truemans End). Turn left and follow it (over the river) to a road junction. The route continues on the BVP on the 'No Through Road' opposite. However, if staying in Farnborough take the (long) footbridge at this junction to safely cross the A331 dual carriageway and its slip roads.

Stage 13: Farnborough to Ascot 15.6miles, ascent 400metres (1300ft), descent 388metres (1260ft). Explorer 145 (Guildford), 160 (Windsor); Landranger 186 (Guildford), 175 (Windsor).

This is a long day. The stage continues northwards along the Blackwater Valley Path (BVP) but only as far as the Shepherd Meadows Nature Reserve. The route then passes through the Sandhurst Memorial Park. Beyond, the stage joins the Three Castles Way which is shown on the Ordnance Survey maps; however there's no support signing on the ground. In addition, the route passes through significant woodland where there are many paths and tracks, so on the day it was more a case of choosing the best tracks and paths on the fly. From Sandhurst, the route heads generally north-eastwards through undulating Berkshire woodland and heathland to the Look Out Discovery Centre (cafe) at the south-east end of Bracknell, before continuing north-eastwards through more woodland. The stage finishes near Ascot racecourse where there is accommodation. Unfortunately, it's over a mile to an eating place.

Route: Return to the road junction at the end of Truemans End and go straight across following the Blackwater Valley Path North sign. Shortly when the road ends go ahead on a path for a few metres to another BVP sign and turn right on a path beside the busy A331 dual carriageway. The BVP stays close to the road but after crossing a railway line diverges from the road to meet and cross the river. The Path then turns left, passes under the dual carriageway and now closely follows the east bank of the river with the main road to its right. Just before the river passes under the dual carriageway again, the Path crosses the river and continues northwards following the line of the main road. On reaching Coleford Bridge Road, turn right and follow the pavement. Cross the dual carriageway then the river on the pavement and continue to a Blackwater Valley Path North sign off right. Follow the tarmac path then steps to a lane below. As it's circular to reach the lane, it's important at this point to make sure you head north. Turn right and almost immediately pass under Coleford Bridge Road; the river is on the left.

Just after the road bridge, the lane branches and the left fork is taken to resume the BVP. The BVP soon crosses the river to its west side and continues northwards in the corridor between the river on the right and the dual carriageway on the left. After passing under a lane to Farnborough North Station (SU 879 567), the Path turns right to cross the Blackwater to its east side. The river is now closely followed for 0.4mile to a fork in the river. The BVP follows the right branch which is a short spur off the river and when this ends continue on the Path parallel to the major road on the left. Eventually the Path emerges onto a road in Frimley. Go forward (right) along the pavement and as it curves right look for a (road) crossing point. Cross with care onto the cycle track opposite which curves left, then curves right up a ramp, bending left at the top to a pavement beside the A325. Follow the pavement to the left as it crosses the A331 dual carriageway and then almost immediately turn off left at a Blackwater Valley Path North sign. The Path descends, passes under the A325 then turns left towards the river. The river is now closely followed; Frimley Business Park is to the right and the area surrounding the Path has been very pleasantly landscaped.

The path continues on the river's east side and shortly after passing under the M3 motorway (3.7miles) and its slip roads, the Path crosses the river then crosses a side brook. The side brook is now followed to where it joins the Blackwater River and the path continues (usually) close to the river's west side through Hawley Meadows; these Meadows are especially nice because of the absence of traffic noise. Just before Blackwater (town), the Path switches sides and very shortly emerges on the busy A30

road near a complex junction with the A331 road. There's a barrier along the opposite side of the A30 and immediately beyond the barrier there's a relatively quiet road (Station Approach) running alongside the A30; this is the road required to continue the BVP.

Cross the A30 by using the pedestrian crossings provided by the traffic lights just to the right and then take the paved path half left to meet Station Approach. Turn right on this and very shortly when it curves right, go straight on to resume the Path along the river's east side. The Path shortly crosses and then follows the river's west side into Shepherd Meadows; follow the BVP through here. When it crosses the river back to the east side, continue to follow the path along the river until the BVP is signed to recross the river. Don't recross but leave the BVP for good by turning right and following signs to Sandhurst Memorial Park's Lake & Café; this is a lovely park. Pass to the left of the lake and continue to buildings (small cafe) now visible and exit via its car park onto Yorktown Road (6.7miles).

Turn right on the road for short distance then go left up Brookside (just before a pedestrian crossing), an unsigned byway signed as a 'No Through Road'. At a T-junction turn left, then take the second right up Thibet Road, signed as a footpath. This becomes a dirt track and after houses becomes a footpath track through the trees and heathland of Wildmoor Heath. There are some nice duckboards to follow. Just keep straight on ignoring turn offs until pylons are met, then take the duckboard to the right which curves left to a walkers gate (SU 846 630); the Three Castles Way is met here but there are no signs to indicate this. Go straight on here and continue straight on until an information board is reached just before some houses.

Turn right here onto a track and keep straight on and pick up a Ramblers Route sign with 3 arrows >>>. Keep straight on (east). The path curves left (northwards) and becomes Eastern Lane for a while; Broadmoor Hospital is very visible on the left. Keep straight on and Eastern Lane becomes a track. At a track fork, branch left to pass left of a lake and reach a track junction. Go straight on here to reach a major track junction (858 645) and go right as directed through an underpass of a busy main road. Keep straight on through Swinley Forest (the Ramblers Route signs give up) following signs to the Look Out and get to a major track junction (871 646) (10.3miles). Here either continue following signs to the Look Out or (slightly shorter) take the north-east track, passing to the right of the reservoir fencing and then take the first track off left (876 650) after 0.4mile (directional sign). After a further 0.5mile, join a major track (874 658) and ignoring turn-offs left and right eventually get to the Look Out which has a play area, Go Ape course, café, car park and more; at weekends it can be very busy.

Exit onto the road via the car park. Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing and take the surfaced pedestrian/cycle path to the right just behind the road. The path passes Waterworld and is on the edge of Bracknell here. When a footbridge is reached use it to cross the A322 dual carriageway. Over, the track circles left descending to the A322 follow the surfaced cycle path towards the traffic lights and follow it left into New Forest Ride. Go straight on at a (small) roundabout, and after a few metres turn off right at a sign into the forest. Pass through a walkers gate and follow the brief path to meet a surfaced forest track. Turn left on this and follow it until traffic can be seen ahead (898 675). At this point, turn off left on a descending unsurfaced track and soon get to a multiway track junction. Take the grassy track north-northeast and follow this until a railway line is approached, then turn right on a short grassy track to a car park area. Exit onto the road (14miles), turn left over the railway bridge and almost immediately turn right on a (north-east) path to

Englemere Pond. The path passes to the left of the pond and comes out on the A329 road; initially only the pond's reeds are visible.

Turn right on the main road and shortly turn off left on Blythewood Lane, a 'No Through Road' which becomes a long bridleway track. Eventually the track emerges on a residential lane (Burleigh Road). Turn left here (byway sign). Follow this to shortly reach a T-junction (with a track opposite). Turn right and follow the 'major' road as it curves left. The route continues by taking the second public road off right (Kennel Avenue) which is signed as a byway. However, go straight on for a B&B a further ½mile away.

Stage 14: Ascot to Windsor 8.7miles, ascent 200metres (650ft), descent 240metres (780ft). Explorer 160 (Windsor); Landranger 175 (Windsor).

This is a deliberately short stage so as to give time to explore Windsor and nearby Eton. It starts with the right of way across Ascot Race Course. From there the route makes its way into Windsor Great Park, an enormous area of parkland. Here, the intention was to continue on the route of the Three Castles Way but we lost it as the Explorer map is a confusion of many tracks with surfaced and unsurfaced shown as being of equal standard. By contrast, the Landranger map is a model of clarity with many of the tracks displayed on the 1:25000 map omitted and the route through the Park clearly shown. The stage finishes along all 2.64 miles of The Long Walk; this is the straight avenue leading up to Windsor Castle and it's an impressive sight.

Route: Return to the byway down Kennel Avenue, follow it to the main road and cross to take gate opposite onto Ascot Race Course. At a track junction take the tarmac track opposite right and then follow the Three Castles sign (a rare sighting) off right on a muddy east-southeast path across Ascot Heath. This converges on a track coming in from the right and very shortly when a T-junction is met turn right on the surfaced drive which swings left to an underpass (SU 925 693). Immediately after the underpass, ascend steps on the right and follow the path southwards parallel to and above a main road. Cross the race track as directed and continue on a path to steps down to the main road. Go forward in the same direction, cross a side road (New Mile Road) and then very shortly afterwards turn left on a good unsurfaced bridleway track. When it meets a road, turn left and ignoring New Mile Road coming in on the left, continue to a byway off left just before houses are reached. Follow the surfaced estate drive as far as it is public then take the signed unsurfaced footpath track off right to a road. Go straight across onto a surfaced estate drive entering Windsor Great Park through the Ascot Gate onto Duke's Lane (2.6miles).

The Lane is followed to where the surfaced track to Royal School and other buildings goes off right. (just after a house). Keep straight on here and at the next surfaced junction, fork right and keep going eastwards to a surfaced T-junction with an estate drive running north-south (972 716). Here go left (away from Cumberland House) and curve right then left round the east side of Royal Lodge to a junction. Ignore the surfaced track off right by going straight ahead through a deer gate. Follow the surfaced track through the deer park and beyond continue on the surfaced track which turns west, crosses a stream and then swings half-right round Snow Hill on the left with its imposing copper statue of George III on horseback. Just after passing the statue, curve right onto the Long Walk and follow this for over two and a half miles with its impressive view ahead of Windsor Castle; the Walk crosses a main road. When no further progress can be made, turn left into Park Street and continue ahead into High Street which is the stage end.

To visit Eton, continue along High Street, passing left of its Guildhall and then left of the Castle. The road bends right (still with the castle) and then left to reach a pedestrian/cycleway over the River Thames with Eton College a short distance beyond.

Stage 15: Windsor to Marlow 14.9miles, ascent 255metres (830ft), descent 258metres (840ft). Explorer 160 (Windsor), 172 (Chiltern Hills East); Landranger 175 (Windsor).

This is an easy walk, full of interest, along the Thames Path national trail. It's a busy river with plenty to see on the water and some very luxurious riverside properties to admire. The River Thames is faithfully followed to Maidenhead. On the way there are views opposite of Windsor Race Course and the Path passes close to Dorney Lake used for the Olympic and Paralympic rowing stages in the 2012 London Games. The river goes along the edge of Maidenhead and swaps sides here. Beyond, the river is again faithfully followed until the Path diverts into the charming village of Cookham. The river is soon rejoined after Cookham and followed to the final side swap at Bourne End; this also marks the point where Berkshire is left for Buckinghamshire. The stage ends through the grassy meadows along the Thames (which is a welcome contrast to the hard surface elsewhere). Marlow is a pleasant town with facilities for tourists.

Route: Return to the Thames as described for visiting Eton in the previous stage and cross the river by the pedestrian/cycleway bridge. Across, immediately turn left down Brocas Street and after a few metres at a lane junction go left to continue on Brocas Street. When the street shortly turns right to go round The Watermans Arms (pub) take the alleyway ahead and shortly enter a meadow where the riverside path close to the Thames is followed. The Path passes under a railway line then a major road and a mile beyond, Windsor Racecourse on the opposite bank can be observed. Continue for nearly a further mile and look for a gap in the hedge to the right. Through, you can view the impressive rowing lake at Dorney. Continuing on, the Path passes beneath the M4 motorway (5.2miles) and as the edge of Maidenhead is approached, the riverside path becomes a private road with housing (River Road) which passes under Brunel's railway bridge. Immediately after leaving the private road turn off left on a path by the Thames, cross under the road bridge and immediately turn right to Mill Lane and right to the main road.

Turn right to cross the Thames on Maidenhead's elegant (grade 1 listed) bridge. Over, immediately turn right on a pavement along the Thames (slightly away from the road). When the path emerges beside the main road, continue on the pavement beside the Thames; this is the half-way point of this stage and there are some cafes on this stretch. Eventually, the Path by the Thames diverges from the main road (7.9miles) and continues by the Thames until it turns left on a track, away from the Thames, to go through Cookham. The track becomes a lane (Mill Lane) and this is followed out to meet the main road from Maidenhead. Turn right into Cookham village. The main part of the village is off to the left down High Street but the Thames Path keeps to the main road following it until a sign off left down a 'No Through Road' to the 11th century Church. Enter the church grounds taking the path on the left which keeps left of Cookham's church.

Exit at the back left of the church grounds and follow the well trodden path back to the Thames. Turn left along the Thames to reach the railway bridge at Bourne End just after a mile (11.5miles). Here the Path ascends to the railway bridge and crosses the river on a footbridge adjacent to the line. Over, the Path descends to the Thames and follows it closely westwards with up-market houses to the right. Around Bourne End Marina the Path joins Wharf Lane and beyond soon follows Riverside Road. When Riverside Road turns right, the Path goes straight on beside the Thames passing through grassy meadows with

their welcome soft surface. Shortly after passing beneath a busy main road, Marlow is a short distance beyond. The Path turns right on a tarmac path to Mill Road. The Thames Path is left at this point by turning right briefly then left into Lock Road. At a cross-road at the top of Lock Road, turn left into Station Road and at the road junction Marlow's High Street (chemist, food, cafes) is off to the right

Stage 16: Marlow to Watlington 14.7miles, ascent 637metres (2070ft), descent 557metres (1810ft). Explorer 172 (Chiltern Hills East), 171 (Chiltern Hills West); Landranger 175 (Windsor), 165 (Aylesbury).

This is a satisfying stretch, with good walking, through the Chiltern Hills, designated an area of outstanding natural beauty. From Marlow, the route heads westwards through the Chiltern foothills following a route shown on the map as Shakespeare's Way; its signs show Shakespeare's head. The route passes through quite a bit of natural woodland and of particular note is Pullingshill Wood used for trench training of WW1 soldiers before being sent to the front. The Way passes through the small charming village of Hambleden (pub) and continues westwards through the lovely parkland of Stonor Park (crossing into Oxfordshire). Shakespeare's Way is abandoned after the parkland for a byway with a noticeable gradient which climbs 169metres (550ft) to Christmas Common village at the top of the Chiltern escarpment. It's then downhill all the way on the (excellent) Oxfordshire Way to the small market town of Watlington where the Fat Fox is the only accommodation on offer. The shops in Watlington include a Post Office and chemist.

Route: Cross over High Street in Marlow into Pound Lane opposite and follow the lane for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the main road. Take the footpath opposite which quickly turns right. Follow the path straight ahead to a path T-junction and turn left into woodland. Keep to the main path and pick up a Shakespeare Way sign and follow this along the main track to a lane. Turn right briefly and then turn off left on a signed track into Pullingshill Wood. Follow the main track westwards to an arrow on a tree; arrows on trees are often significant. Follow the arrow, descending on a path half-right to a stile (SU 820 866) and over, enter a field path enclosed by fencing on each side. The path enters a field turning left to reach a lane.

Go right briefly then left on a north-of-west forest road. Take the second left off this (signed Shakespeare Way) on a path which ascends to the right of Woodside House onto a lane. Turn right for 325metres then turn off left (signed Chiltern Way) on a path straight across a field then in the next field follow the trodden path to houses and out onto a lane at Rotten Row. Turn left on the lane and at a left corner, turn off right on a signed field track to a path junction. Go straight ahead here and continue into a wood where the track descends to meet a track. Turn right briefly to meet a track and turn left into quaint Hambleden village (4.7miles) passing the Stag & Huntsman pub.

Ignore a lane off right signed to Pheasant's Hill but very shortly take the next lane off right (just past the entry to the church). Follow this lane for 290metres to the second signed field path off right. Take this and go a quarter left to the field corner and re-meet the lane (the path cuts off a corner of the road). Turn right on the lane for 320metres then turn off left on an ascending signed path into woodland. Through, cross a clearing on a clear grass track and then descend through woodland to a track and path junction (767 877). Go straight across (westwards) onto an ascending path which gradually improves into a good track and leaves the woodland. On meeting a concrete track, turn left and follow this past Upper Woodend Farm out onto a lane. Turn right to a T-junction and take the signed footpath opposite across the field and into a wood. Follow the trodden path through the wood and exit into a field. Follow the left edge to a stile where the hedge side is swapped. Follow the

right edge to another stile where the hedge side is again swapped and then follow the left edge to a gate leading onto a short track to a lane. Take the forest track opposite through a wood and follow the main track which becomes a lovely trodden path overlooking the estate parkland (with its deer) of Stonor Park; there are good views of Stonor House from the path. Follow the path to a B-road (9.2miles).

Turn right leaving the Shakespeare Way. Ignore a lane off right and after a further ¼mile on the B-road, turn off right on a byway signed 'Christmas Common 2.5miles' (9.7miles); the sign omits to mention that it's all uphill! The byway is (poorly) surfaced up to Hollandridge Farm and beyond the lane is unsurfaced. After nearly a further mile, the lane starts to pass houses and a sign for the Oxfordshire Way is met (717 929). Turn left here and almost immediately take the path off half-right through woodland which shortly reaches a lane. Turn right passing the Fox & Hounds pub and continue on the 'major' road through Christmas Common village. Just after leaving the village (and just after a road off left) turn off left on the Oxfordshire Way. Follow the trodden path through the field (ignore the path off left) and descend through woodland onto a tarmac track which crosses the Ridgeway national trail and continues to meet a B-road. Turn left here for Watlington. The road becomes Shirburn Street and the Fat Fox Inn is on the right.

Stage 17: Watlington to Great Kimble 14.3miles, ascent 489metres (1590ft), descent 486metres (1580ft). Explorer 171 (Chiltern Hills West), 181 (Chiltern Hills North); Landranger 175 (Windsor), 165 (Aylesbury).

The Ridgeway national trail is based on a route used by people living around 3000BC. It follows the western edge of the Chiltern Hills north-eastwards and is used by this stage. The section of the Ridgeway from Watlington is a good, wide, straight, contouring, enclosed track allowing for speedy progress now as in the past. The Ridgeway is left for a lunch break at the 17th century Lions of Bledlow inn; this pub and other places in Bledlow village are much used for locations in TV series, particularly Midsomer Murders. The Ridgeway is rejoined on the edge of Princes Risborough where a surfaced restricted byway, the Upper Icknield Way, is followed. The Ridgeway trail then climbs further up into the Chiltern Hills and is followed to the base of Pulpit Hill. The Ridgeway is then left here for a descent to accommodation on the B-road to Little Kimble.

Route: From the Fat Fox continue to the road junction in Watlington and turn left into Hill Road. Continue for ⅔mile to a Ridgeway sign pointing left and right. Turn left on the restricted byway track of the excellently signed national trail. After ½mile, cross a concrete track; this is the Oxfordshire Way track used on the previous stage. Continue on, the route is unmistakable. Shortly after crossing the next lane the track passes beneath the M40 motorway (3.2miles) and ½mile later the Ridgeway crosses the A40 road. Beyond, the Ridgeway crosses a track then a lane (Kingston Hill). When the next track is met go right and immediately bend left. Continuing, the 'lakes' visible on the left are due to chalk quarrying with the extraction leading to pits filled with rainwater. The next lane crossed is Hill Road; Chinnor village lies ½mile to the left down Hill Road. Keep on the Ridgeway crossing two signed bridleway/path junctions and then reach a bridleway off left (by some houses) signed to 'Bledlow 0.7m' (SP 770 012) (7.2miles).

Leave the Ridgeway and enter Buckinghamshire here by taking the bridleway track. When it curves right at a 'No Horses' sign, take the trodden field path off left which emerges at a lane junction. Take the lane straight ahead (Church End) passing the front of the Lions of Bledlow pub. Carry on down Church End (passing the church) to a T-junction and turn right for a short distance to a Chiltern Way sign off left. Follow the field path half-right through a

hedge onto a track. Turn right briefly then go left on a field path as directed (Chiltern Way) and out onto Oddley Lane. Turn left on the lane to a T-junction. Here go briefly left (as signed) and then right along Church Lane, a 'No Through Road'. Turn off left as directed passing to the right of the church and on the path beyond reach a path T-junction. Here leave the Chiltern Way by turning left to meet a lane.

Turn right through Saunderton. Ignoring a minor road off left, curve right over a railway bridge and almost immediately after turn left towards Princes Risborough. At a T-junction turn right again and then turn right again along the B4444 (Poppy Road) to shortly meet a main road. Turn right and shortly at the end of the houses, rejoin the Ridgeway by turning off left on a restricted surfaced byway. Follow the rough lane (Upper Icknield Way) which is on the eastern edge of Princes Risborough. When New Road is reached (11miles), cross to continue on the restricted byway. After just under ¼mile, take a turn off right which initially is beside a right field boundary. Beyond, the path continues ascending north-of-east to come close to Kop Hill road before veering off left contouring (with good views overlooking Princes Risborough) to shortly reach Peters Lane. Turn right briefly then turn off left to follow the ridge west-of-north through trees to reach an open viewpoint. From here, turn right and starts a (longish) descent through woodland coming out by the side of The Plough Inn at Lower Cadsden. Turn left to shortly meet a lane (Longdown Hill).

Turn left and after about 65metres turn off right at a Ridgeway sign onto a track which soon becomes a path. The path crosses a bridleway then enters a field where the right boundary along the top field edge is followed. After about 150metres leave the Ridgeway by turning off half-left (829 051) on a signed path which passes through a series of metal gates (each visible from the last one) to meet a track; alternatively, continue to follow the Ridgeway to meet the track. Turn left down the track to the main A4010 road. Turn right for a short distance and then first left into Church Lane. Immediately before the Infants School turn off right and follow the trodden path signed the Aylesbury Ring. This soon turns left to follow a right field boundary and then twists right and left to cross a single track railway line. After, the path continues along a left field boundary to Grove Lane (B4009). The Swan Inn offering food and accommodation is a short distance to the left.

Stage 18: Great Kimble to Waddesdon 9.5miles, ascent 206metres (670ft), descent 225metres (730ft). Explorer 181 (Chiltern Hills North); Landranger 165 (Aylesbury).

This is an easy stage with relatively low mileage which goes north-westish through fairly flat farmland and estate parkland to Waddesdon. This is an area of 'Ways' and some of the waymarked posts displaying all the different route symbols used resemble a row of boy scout badges; the Aylesbury Ring's duck rotates to indicate the direction to take and at one point is to be spotted lying on its back as if dead! Thus there is plenty of choice in picking a route to Waddesdon. However, having enjoyed a small section of the Aylesbury Ring (AR) on the previous stage, it made it a good choice for practically all of this stage. The AR is well signed but in places appears not well walked. Furthermore, ploughed fields may be encountered and walkers may find it preferable to walk round the field edges. From Great Kimble, the AR passes through the hamlet of Ford then Dinton village and on through Eythrope Park. Waddesdon village is a short distance beyond and has both accommodation and eating places.

Route: From the Swan Inn return to the AR Path and turn left on a signed trodden field path. This makes for the left field edge and follows it to a lane. Go left briefly then turn right down a signed farm access drive but before the farmhouse turn off left over a stile into a field. Go straight across the field to a stile and over turn right to follow the right field

boundaries through successive fields until an access drive is reached; the drive is then followed to a lane junction at Kimble Wick. Take the 'No Through Road' opposite left. The lane becomes a track and when the track turns right the North Bucks Way and the AR part. Keeping to the AR, go straight on across a field on a trodden path. In the next field follow the right edge to a stile to the left of the corner. Now go half-left to a crossing point to the right of the diagonal corner and in the next field follow the right edge, heading to the left of the farm building. Beyond, go forwards, cross a track and proceed a quarter-left (west-northwest) across a field to reach another farm track. Cross this and go straight across a grass strip then cross another small grassy area into a field. Cross the field a quarter-left aiming to the left of buildings; the field path crosses two access drives. After crossing the second drive, enter a field. Here, go half-left to a stile just to the right of the far left corner and emerge on Water Lane in Ford (3.4miles); unfortunately, the pub opposite has now closed its doors.

Turn right along Water Lane (temporarily leaving the AR) and shortly take a signed path off left down a farm access keeping to the left piece of concrete. Go ahead to a stile into a field and go slightly right of straight ahead to a footbridge then turn right, diverging from the stream, to a gate (where the AR is rejoined). Through, follow a track along the right hedge which curves left to a road. Go right for a few metres then take the footpath off left and go a quarter-left to half-way along the opposite side and cross the next field a quarter left to the corner. Cross the next field straight ahead and in the subsequent field follow a left hedge. Beyond, continue in the same direction on a trodden path which leads to School Lane. Turn left and then shortly turn right at a small triangular junction. Pass Dinton's church and on meeting a more major road, take the lane opposite to meet the main A418 road.

Turn right for 80metres then turn left on a signed path. Follow the right boundary down a long field to a stile on the right part way down; the ruins of Dinton Castle can be seen close by just after leaving the main road. Over the stile go half-left and then follow the left hedge to the field corner. In the next field follow the right hedge to the corner and then go half-left in the next field to a corner. Beyond, the left edge boundary is followed on a track towards Starveall Farm. Just before the farm buildings veer left into a field where the right edge is followed northwards across two fields. Go half-right in the next field to cross a stile and then turn left along the left hedge to a field gap. Beyond, go half-right to an estate drive. Turn left on the estate road and shortly cross an elegant bridge over the River Thames (6.7miles)

Just over the bridge, the estate drive turns left and almost immediately there's a well decorated marker post. Turn right here on a surfaced estate road signed the North Bucks Way and (many) others. Shortly reach Beachenden Cottages and leave the estate road by taking the signed path off left. This passes the back of the cottages before ascending gently alongside a left hedge and continues in the same direction through a small patch of woodland. The path turns right so as to keep left of the remaining woodland on the right and having reached the end of the wood, crosses a field half-left to an estate road. Turn left for 200metres then take an initially enclosed unsurfaced bridleway track off right and follow this north-northwestwards. The track meets the start of the public road at North Lodge and the lane is followed north-westwards to a T-junction.

Go opposite right into the grounds of Waddesdon Stud and follow the path directions past the buildings and through a small belt of trees into a field. Go half-left to the corner and into a small belt of woodland. Beyond, cross a field along the left margin and continuing in the same direction meet a track. Cross and continue in the same direction to shortly reach

trees and skirt the trees to the right for a short distance before turning left to very shortly meet Warmstone Lane.

Take the signed path opposite right and follow this through woodland to emerge into a field. The signed right of way is straight across the field (or follow the left field boundary if ploughed). Either way, meet the tarmac path around Waddesdon's school and follow it to the right until 200metres along the second side where there's a dog waste bin. Here turn right off the tarmac path through allotments to meet a gravel path at the far end. Turn right here and almost immediately turn left on a bridge over a ditch, continuing to shortly meet a road. Turn right a short distance to the main A41 road. Pubs and a General Stores lie to the left along the main road.

Stage 19: Waddesdon to Whaddon 15.2miles, ascent 391metres (1270ft), descent 354metres (1150ft). Explorer 181 (Chiltern Hills North), 192 (Milton Keynes); Landranger 165 (Aylesbury).

This is a lovely walk which follows the North Bucks Way (NBW) throughout, as the Aylesbury Ring peels off eastwards shortly after Waddesdon while the NBW goes (mainly) northwards. The NBW passes through a number of villages linked by farmland paths; again if paths cross recently ploughed fields then the going can be rough and field margins may present an easier alternative. The first village encountered is charming Quainton with its distinctive windmill. The ridge along Quainton Hill follows and is the highlight of this stage having lovely open walking with good views; it's pretty flat after that. The NBW leads on to small quiet villages of East Claydon, Verney Junction and Addington where there's a large equestrian centre; the NBW signing around Addington seemed a bit deficient. The only large village of the day is Great Horwood where you may be lucky to catch a very late lunch at one of its two pubs. After skirting south of Nash village, the route heads eastwards for Whaddon, another quiet village but it does have accommodation.

Route: Cross the A41 to the 'No Through Road' opposite and follow it through the bollards and straight on along an enclosed path into a field. Follow the right boundary for two fields then go half-left across a field to cross a farm track at the field corner and beyond go north-northwest across a field to a stile onto a farm track. Turn right on the track which follows a right hedge northwards. When the track turns right at the field end, go straight on to meet and follow a left edge, and at the end of this long field, cross the single track railway line. From there follow the left field edge (west-of-north) to cross a brook on a footbridge and continue in this direction across the field to pick up and follow a left field edge. The left edge is then followed in the next field and in the subsequent field diverge gently (east-of-north) from the left boundary to find a stile half way along the opposite side. Beyond, a between houses path leads to a road in the lovely village of Quainton.

Turn left then turn right up the left side of The Green and turn left on meeting its top road (Upper Street). After a short distance, turn right at a North Bucks Way sign. This leads along a well walked path to a gate onto open rolling downs. Skirt just right of the first summit to reach a walkers' gate and thereafter keep parallel to the right boundary as the ridge is traversed to a further walkers' gate. Keep north-northeast to reach a further walkers' gate in the right boundary; there's a wireless mast visible in the field to the right. Cross the stile and twist right for 130metres and turn left (northwards) to follow to the right of a tree line which is just below the ridge summit (on the left). However turn off right after about 200metres and descend Conduit Hill steeply to a crossing point which is in the hedge about 80metres to the right of a house with a pond in its garden. Beyond aim just

east-of-north to the next crossing point (which should be visible) and maintain this direction in the next field to reach a lane (SP 752 226) (3.8miles)

The path continues opposite (signed) and goes east-of-north across the first three fields. In the next field, make for the top right corner and beyond, look for a crossing in the right boundary near the top right corner. Having crossed a stream, turn left and follow a track out onto a lane. Turn left for $\frac{1}{3}$ mile and turn off right at a signed NBW path (close to the entry to Lower Farm opposite). In the triangular field entered, go north-northwest to exit at the top and then follow right boundaries (west-northwest) until a gate is met. Through, the path continues west-northwest but on a track alongside the left boundary. Eventually the track curves left towards the church of East Claydon village and becomes a lane which continues to meet a road.

Go left towards Botolph Claydon but after 80metres turn off right on Sandhill Road, signed for Buckingham. Towards the end of the village turn right at a NBW sign onto a track which leads into a field. Slowly converge on the top right of the field and in the field diagonally to its right follow the left boundary. The path crosses the next field slightly left of straight ahead (but go anticlockwise on the margins if the field is ploughed). In the final field need to go north to the top left corner of the field and out on to the road (via the red-metal gate).

Turn left on the road into Verney Junction village and take the first lane off right signed as a 'No Through Road'. Follow the lane to the disused railway line which still has its track down. Turn right on the rails for a few metres and look for a stile on the left. Beyond, follow the left hedge of two fields then follow the trodden path (slightly left of ahead) to cross Claydon Brook on a footbridge. Now follow the ascending trodden path north-northeast, pass through a field boundary and continue towards Addington Church. The path passes to the right of the church and emerges on a lane (8.5miles). Go north up the lane and ignore all left turn-offs until a very large building on the left (resembling a modern barn) is passed. At this point, take the next lane turn-off left (746 286); this turn-off is $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the church. Follow the lane northwards passing an Equestrian Centre on the way to the main A413 road.

Turn right for $\frac{1}{4}$ mile (using the verge opposite) until a NBW sign off left. Go half-right on a trodden path to a farm track. Briefly turn left on the track into a field then turn right along its right boundary. On reaching the field corner, turn left to keep along the right boundary. Cross the boundary near the field bottom and continue half-left to a footbridge over a stream. Beyond, keep north-northeast (initially by the right boundary) across a succession of fields to reach a footbridge (near the top left corner of the final triangular-looking field) (764 305). Having crossed, turn right along the stream in the first field and then maintaining this east-northeast direction, aim for the diagonal corner in the second field to reach a B-road.

Turn left into the large village of Great Horwood keeping to the major road through the village (11.3miles); both the Swan and Crown inns are passed. Follow the B-road (signed to Nash) out of the village and continue beyond until a signed sharp bend right with a NBW sign off left. In the field entered follow the right boundary northwards for two fields, then continue northwards to a stile in the field corner and turn left along a short right boundary to a stream crossing. Beyond, go north-northwest across a field and maintain this direction in the next field along a left fence to meet the main A421 road.

Go up the enclosed track opposite right following the clearly marked track past paddocks and stables. At the end of the track, enter the field ahead and follow the left edge as it curves right to a stile. In the next field go just right of straight ahead and cross a track just before a stile. Follow the left hedge in the following field. Cross into the next field and

make for the top right corner where there is a stream. Turn right along the stream following it to and through a substantial farm. Beyond, follow the signs into a field and follow the left boundary to meet a track. Turn right on this to Winslow Road at Wood End, just south of Nash village.

Cross the road and follow the lane opposite keeping left of the duck pond. The lane becomes an enclosed track which ends at a walkers' gate and beyond go half-left to follow the clearly defined, delightful hillside grassy path along a right boundary. The path curves right to cross a stream and thereafter follows left boundaries before joining a short track to meet the access drive of Barnhill Farm (which is to the right). Turn left on the drive but leave it after about 50metres to go straight on along a right boundary (as the drive starts curving left). At the end of the field, continue in the same direction but along a left edge; Whaddon village can be viewed above. When the left boundary bends half-right, continue to follow it and pass to the left of Church-Hill Farm and meets its access drive. Cross the drive and ascend north-of-east towards Whaddon Church. Pass right of the church to a kissing gate which soon leads on to Church Lane. Follow (rough) Church Lane down to meet Stock Lane, the 'major' road through the village. Whaddon's inn and the main part of the village are to the left but the route continues to the right.

Stage 20: Whaddon to Stoke Goldington 15.5miles, ascent 357metres (1160ft), descent 403metres (1310ft). Explorer 192 (Milton Keynes), 207 (Newport Pagnell); Landranger 152 (Northampton).

This is a surprisingly pleasant walk! From Whaddon it's a short walk on the North Bucks Way (NBW) to reach the western edge of Milton Keynes. Thereafter we were grateful to a local guide for showing us a route through this large town; this route also incorporated medieval churches, Roman remains and concrete cows. If you should get lost it helps to know that (busy) grid roads running vertically are numbered V1 to V11 (from the west) and the horizontal roads are H1 to H10 (from the north) with (named) roundabouts at their intersections. Its network of (mainly surfaced) paths and tracks for walkers/cyclists together with its footbridges and underpasses for the H and V roads means that none of the busy roads need to be negotiated. This all makes the walk through this conurbation feel surprisingly spaced out with a lot of green surroundings, even when near to its centre around the railway station. Beyond the station, the route uses a stream which is loosely followed northwards to the Grand Union Canal. The canal is taken for a short distance to make the final exit from the town. After that the route heads for Little Linford Wood and after skirting round it, the M1 is passed under at Tathall End. It's then a simple matter of following tracks to reach the small pleasant village of Stoke Goldington. It has a couple of good B&B's and the local hostelry provides food Tuesday to Sunday.

Route: From Whaddon continue down Stock Lane and when the major road curves right continue straight on briefly then turn left into Briary View. When this street bends right, turn off left on a signed footpath track and follow it as it curves left and then right to a field junction. Turn right as signed and follow the right hedge east-northeast down two fields to meet a good track. Turn left and follow this north-northwest along a left boundary which is latterly along the east side of Oakhill Wood. When a sign off right to Shenley Wood is reached leave the North Bucks Way and take this wide tarmac track; the prison on the left is hidden by foliage. Keep on the main track and cross the footbridge over V2 (Tattenhoe Street).

Continue on the main track for another 240metres then turn left through a field gate into Shenley Wood; there's a Shenley Wood notice board by the gate. Follow the track, which

soon becomes unsurfaced, northwards through the wood following signs to North Shenley Wood; ignore tracks and paths off. Continue on the track until Shenley Church End is signed off right; at this point, houses will be visible ahead. Turn right and keep eastwards to exit the wood via a gate onto a tarmac path. Continue on the tarmac path for about 220metres then turn off left over a visible footbridge crossing V3 (Fulmer Street) (SP 829 363). Beyond, turn immediately left on a path and almost immediately turn right through a walkers' gate into a rough grazing area known as the Toot, which is a scheduled ancient monument arising from a moated motte and bailey castle sited here in the 13th century.

Cross the Toot just right of straight ahead so as to exit at its top right corner onto Holy Thorn Lane. Turn left briefly to meet Oakhill Road. Turn right and then left into Tattershall Close. When the Close swings right, go straight on through bollards into a Recreation Ground and take the surfaced path curving right which then curves left passing to the left of (medieval) St Mary's Church, Shenley. Beyond, shortly reach a triangular path junction. Bear right here. The path curves left so as to pass to the right of some games courts and shortly after reaches the pavement along Burchard Crescent (road). Turn left and shortly turn right down Benbow Court (a road with a brick surface). At the bottom, go straight ahead across a small patch of grass then pass between yellow cycle track posts which cross Lipscomb Lane to reach Shenley Road (at a clearing with open-air wooden structures). Turn left on the underpass of V4 (Watling Street).

Beyond the underpass, pass right of the Talbot Inn and then go right on a footpath signed Loughton Millenium Meadow and follow the windy path through this small piece of land out onto Ashpole Furlong (road). Turn left briefly then right through yellow posts on the signed cycle path to the Bus and Railway Stations. When it joins Bradwell Road, Loughton Baptist Church is on the right, and immediately after the church turn right on a surfaced path following it out onto Snaith Crescent. Turn left, ignore a turn off right and continue down the road to meet Whitworth Lane. Turn right and when the road curves sharp right, take the surfaced path off left which emerges on Leys Road. Turn right over a bridge and then continue to follow Leys Road eastwards, ignoring School Lane and then Pitcher Lane coming in on the left. Beyond continue on Leys Road, now a 'No Through Road' to its end. Here turn left through yellow bollard posts (signed to the Railway Station) and take the surfaced track to a road junction. Cross Redland Drive into Common Lane (cycle track). At the top, go straight ahead through bollards to meet a track, turn left and if making for the station, shortly turn off right over a long footbridge over the A5 main road and the railway line; over, the station is just to the left (4.6miles).

If not diverting to the station, don't take the footbridge to the station but keep straight on along the track and follow the upper, outer track which curves left. Having gone round a barrier, exit onto the road on the right and take Linceslade Grove opposite left. Take the first road off left, Turvill End, signed 'Footpath to Church'. Follow the road up and take the tarmac footpath at its end which curves right to a road junction with Loughton's 13th century church opposite right. Enter the church grounds through the brick pillar entrance and follow the tarmac path to the left of the church. The delightful path continues south-west past a picturesque cottage to emerge on Bradwell Road. Turn right for a short distance then left into Lucy Lane to a bridleway sign off left (on the right bend). When this very shortly meets a tarmac path turn right. Hereafter follow signs to Bradwell Abbey. Follow the main path to Linceslade Grove road. The tarmac path continues opposite, soon crossing the stream on its left and then continues to loosely follow the stream now on its right. Keep to the left of the stream and pass under the Portway (H5).

The track curves left and shortly (with Lodge Lake ahead) go right crossing the stream on a bridge. Continue straight ahead following the twisting path as it crosses between lakes and then loosely follows the east bank of Lodge Lake. When a cycle track is met with a car park beyond, turn left and follow the cycle track which follows the line of Bradwell Road on the right. As Bradwell Road meets Dansteed Way (H4), the cycle track curves left. Ignore a cycle track off right and continue to the next cycle track off right (sign) where the track passes under Dansteed Way. Beyond, the main path turns left, crosses the stream then turns right (east-of-north) and ignoring paths off left, pass under the A5 (not part of the grid numbering).

Just beyond, ignore a track off right to continue west-of-northwards on the main cycle path which follows to the left of the stream. When a cycle track is met, go through the hedge gap opposite and turn left to follow the enclosed bridleway. Turn off right on a tarmac path which leads into a car park at Bradwell Abbey. Keep ahead through the car park turning right into the courtyard area; the area is the site of a 12th century priory although only a 14th century cruck barn and a small chapel remain. Turn left in the courtyard to take the concrete track north. Pass through the gate at the end and turn right on an unsurfaced track which meets a surfaced track. Turn right under the railway then go left on an unsurfaced path just before a bridge over the stream. The path follows to the left of the stream passing under Monk's Way (H3) and then curves left passing Milton Keynes concrete cows (which are a copy of the originals).

Keep to the main path which curves right and then right again. Ignore a path off left to keep on the main path and reach a cycle track. The route continues on the bridleway track opposite but it's worth turning right on the cycle track briefly to view the remains of a Roman Villa on the left of the track (yes, Milton Keynes has got everything!). Follow the bridleway continuation northwards and when it gets close to Millers Way (H2) ahead, it curves right, following its line. The path curves right again to cross the stream and reach a cross-track. Turn left to pass under Millers Way and keep to the main path to come close to and follow parallel to Grafton Street (V6) (on the right). Continue on the track, pass under a bridge for a disused railway and curve left to rise to the disused railway line which is now a multi-user track. Turn left to cross dual-carriageway Grafton Street and immediately over, take the tarmac path off half-left into a small children's play area. Leave from the back right corner to a footbridge over the Grand Union Canal (8.3miles). Over, follow the tarmac path to the right and on meeting the canal towpath turn left (eastwards); there's now just over a mile to do on the canal. After passing under the second bridge continue on the towpath to railings between the canal and towpath, on a sharp right curve. Cross an overflow and continue shortly to a seat with an obvious hedge gap to its left. Pass through here and go straight ahead on a good grass track to the visible ruins of St Peter's church (12th century). Pass left of the ruins to meet a concrete farm lane and turn left.

After curving right past Linford Lakes, the lane turns sharp left over two outlets from a lake and continues past Hill Farm to a T-junction. Turn right for 1/3mile then turn left on a signed bridleway following the left hedge to Little Linford Wood. Turn right along the wood edge (the wood is on the left). Go through a hedge gap into a field and turn left along the left hedge to resume along the wood edge. Beyond the wood, keep along the left hedge which eventually curves right. Look for a good footbridge off left into a field (bridleway sign). Here, the right hedge is followed to a bridle gate where the hedge side is swapped. Continue along the left boundary in this and the next field, then go a quarter-right as directed to a gate. Through, follow the right fence to a bridle gate and go forward to a road (13.1miles).

Turn right to meet a road and go straight on (right) signed for Gayhurst. Proceed through tiny Tathall End. Shortly at a sharp right bend, turn off left as directed on an unsurfaced track which twists right (passing left of a house). The track shortly passes under the M1 and shortly becomes a wide northwards farm track. When the track turns left (to Littlewood Farm), continue straight on along a right hedge (signed). Maintain this direction along a crop division boundary and a left edge to reach a track T-junction with Stokepark Wood directly ahead. Turn right along the wood edge and continue on the track to a track T-junction. Turn right and follow the track out to Dag Lane. Turn left and ascend on this bridleway to meet Church Lane with Stoke Goldington's church opposite, marking the stage end.

Stage 21: Stoke Goldington to Ecton 12.7miles, ascent 289metres (940ft), descent 280metres (910ft). Explorer 207 (Newport Pagnell), 224 (Corby); Landranger 152 (Northampton).

This is very much a rural route through small pretty villages and through farmland with large arable fields leading to fields separated by gaps rather than gates. The first objective is large Salcey Forest north-west of Stoke Goldington and the forest entry marks the start of Northamptonshire. Fortunately, the tracks through the forest are straightforward and lead northwards through to Piddington. In reaching Brafield-on-the-Green, the Northampton International Raceway (used for stock car racing) is passed; it seems incongruously placed amongst the fields passed through although it has been there since 1949! The larger village of Cogenhoe is nicely situated on the River Nene and beyond, the route passes lakes formed by previous gravel pit activity. Charming Ecton village is just beyond and lies east of Northampton; the village is famous for its links with (US president) Benjamin Franklin's family on his father's side. The obvious place to stay is The Worlds End hotel which provides both accommodation and food.

Route: At the top of Dag Lane, turn left at the church on a gravel track which quickly turns right. When it turns left, leave it for a stile on the right and follow the edge of Stokepark Wood to a stile (at the end of the wood). Go half-left to a gate then half-right to very shortly pass through a walkers' gate into a field and follow the left hedge to Purse Lane. Turn left briefly then turn right on a signed path along a left field edge. At a footpath sign, turn left through a field gap and follow the edge of a wood to meet a path at the wood end. Turn left for a short distance (along the wood edge) then turn right as signed and follow the left boundary for two fields. In the third, follow the left edge as it turns right to a stile. Over, cross the field on a cut crop path to a hedge and follow the left hedge to a field gap. Continue forwards a short distance to a hedge boundary at right angles and turn left along the right boundary (unsigned). Follow the right hedge into Salcey Forest which is a natural forest (2miles).

In the forest, follow the well trodden bridleway path. Ignore a good path off right to go straight on (bridleway sign) and the path becomes more major. Keep on the main path to a bridleway fork sign near the edge of the wood (SP 809 501) and go right (into the wood). Ignore a minor path off left to stay on the major path and soon after reaching a waymarked post with multiple signs, meet a major forest track on a corner. Turn right and follow this excellent wide track out to a road; as well as being signed as a bridleway, this track is also signed as the Horse Trail.

Cross the road and take the good forest track opposite, which is both signed as a bridleway and the Horse Trail. Ignore the bridleway sign off right to remain on the main Horse Trail signed track. Similarly soon after, ignore a left turn off on the Woodpecker Trail

to remain on the main sandy track (carrying the Horse Trail). The Horse Trail crosses a track (with a seat on the corner) and beyond, it continues as a more minor but still sandy track. Continue on this Horse Trail track until near the edge of the forest when it is signed off left. Go straight on here and the track shortly leaves the forest (805 529). Beyond the forest, the bridleway continues northwards as an unsurfaced byway between hedges which becomes a lane into and through Piddington village.

In the village, as the lane bends left, turn off right into Chapel End (lane) and when this ends at the old Wesleyan Chapel (now a museum), continue along a signed tarmac path. When this shortly meets a tarmac path, turn right. The path shortly becomes Chapel Lane and is followed up a 'No Through Road' section to meet the road through Hackleton village (5.7miles). Go opposite right up Lucas Lane but after a few metres strike off half-right (signed) across a field to the diagonal opposite corner where a footbridge is crossed into a small field. Go a quarter-right here to a stile (which is to the left of the shed). Cross a track opposite left into a field. Go half-left across the field to a corner and onto a track. Turn left on the signed bridleway and follow the left hedge northwards to the end of two fields. Here pass through the field gap and turn right (as directed) along the right hedge to an iron gate. Through, follow the right hedge (the Northampton International Stadium is over the hedge) to a road.

Turn left for 210metres then turn off right on a signed path and follow the right field edge. At the end of the second field turn left on a gravel track passing to the right of Furze Farm and at the top, go through the farm gate. Go straight ahead aiming to the left of the farm buildings at the bottom of the field. Beyond, maintain the same northwards direction following the left edge down two fields. At the bottom of the second field turn right along the left hedge briefly then go left through a field gap and follow the left hedge which curves right (passing right of a water tower) to a main road in Brafield-on-the-Green.

Go straight across into Chapel Lane, branching left at its Green to reach and enter its church grounds (8.9miles). Follow the tarmac path which keeps left of the church and exit via a wrought iron gate onto a path junction. Turn right and when a four-way sign is reached, go left on a track along the right edge. The track becomes gravelly and at a field junction (825 592) go right to continue on the gravel track following the right hedge along one and a half sides of the field to a footpath sign. Here go right following the left hedge down the field to a field junction. Go left (not signed) following the left hedge as it gently descends down three fields. Beyond the third field, keep to the left boundary on a path which passes through a gate, becomes a track and then a rough lane. When a road is met at the east end of pretty Cogenhoe village, go straight across into Church Street (signed for 'Pocket Park') and on reaching a fork, branch right into Mill Lane ('Nene Way' sign). Shortly when the lane bends sharp right go straight on (Nene Way sign). Pass the last house on the left and turn left along an enclosed short path to a gate. Descend the field parallel to the left fence and exit via a walkers' gate at the bottom onto a lane.

Turn left and ignore a Nene Way sign off right so as to continue straight on over a side branch of the River Nene. Continue on the lane through the caravan park and keep straight ahead to cross the River Nene then follow the footpath sign right. Follow the river bank for a short distance before going half-left on a trodden path to a lovely old stone bridge. Beyond, follow the trodden path to a track junction. Go straight on following the stony track northwards. When the main track curves sharp right the byway splits. Go straight on here through large stones onto a stretch of byway where all sorts of rubbish has been dumped. Just as the exceptionally busy A45 is about to be met, the byway turns

left on a rough surface and shortly after ploughing through yet more dumped rubbish, a minor road is met.

Turn right over the A45 dual carriageway and continue for ¼mile before taking a footpath off left (immediately after the sign for Ecton). Go up the field northwards and then go straight ahead across two fields following the directional markers to reach a lane. Immediately turn right, signed 'To High St' and follow the enclosed tarmac path to High Street. Turn left up High Street, forking right into Wellinborough Road to meet the main A4500 road. Ecton's inn is just to the left.

Stage 22: Ecton to Harrington 14miles, ascent 320metres (1040ft), descent 268metres (870ft). Explorer 224 (Corby), 223 (Northampton); Landranger 152 (Northampton), 141 (Kettering).

This is an area where there are many footpaths, bridleways and byways shown on the map, so it's possible to devise quite a few routes between Ecton and Harrington. The route presented here endeavours to minimise road walking and it worked well. It is a nice walk connecting the quiet villages of Mears Ashby, Hannington, Walgrave and Old. There's a lane walk on the approach to Harrington towards the end of the stage but it does have the advantage of crossing the A14 racetrack. Harrington is a charming estate village which although tiny has good accommodation and somewhere to eat.

Route: Turn right along the main road for about 180metres then turn off left on a footpath signed 'Northampton Round'. Follow the right hedge to a walkers' gate then head a quarter-left to a stile. Over, go half-left (north) to find a walkers' gate then proceed a quarter-right to a stile (aim to the left of the buildings). Over go half-right to the diagonally opposite field corner and out onto Washbrook Lane. Turn right, descend, ascend and immediately after the entrance to the Upper Car Park of Sywell Country Park turn off left on a footpath (sign). Take the cut crop path half-right (north-northeast) across two fields to a lane (SP 838 657). Turn left for 260metres, then turn off right through a hedge gap (sign) and go half-left to the diagonally opposite corner. Cross a stile and follow the right boundary along a wall to a stile onto a lane. Turn right and then first left towards Mears Ashby's church. Follow the lane which turns sharp right and then almost immediately meets a lane. Turn left into Church Street. Ignore a right turn into Bakehouse Lane and continue to meet North Street.

Turn right then turn first left along Highfield Road and just after the derestriction sign take a path off left (sign). Turn right into the field then follow parallel to the left hedge, east-of-north to a signed gap into the next field which is about 30metres up from the left of the field. Go straight across the field to a signed field gap to the left of a tree. Now go slightly left of straight ahead to a signed gap on the left of the left tree (of two) and then slightly left of straight ahead in the next field to a gap out onto a road.

The footpath continues opposite and follows the left edge to a field gap. Through follow the left edge to take a walker's gate on the left. Here the path splits. Take the straight on path, north-northwest to the right of the ditch. When a farm is spotted half-right, make for it to cut off field corners but eventually return to the left field edge and find a waymarked green gate to the left of the farm (Hardwick Grange). Through, go straight on along the left hedge to a lane. Immediately turn left off the lane along an unsurfaced track. Keep to the left of the buildings, go through a walkers' gate and up the field to a waymarked walkers' gate. Turn right as directed following the line of the right edge to a waymarked post (835 701) and turn left as directed still with the right field edge to the next waymarked post. Here,

pass through the field gap on the right and along the left field line to a gate at the end. Beyond, turn right on a gravel track. On reaching a field boundary going left, there's a (small) route choice.

Either turn left along the right field margin but shortly pass through a field gap (on the right). In the field entered go a quarter-left across the field to a gate onto a layby (formed from the old main road). Turn left on the layby to the A43 main road, turn right for about 65metres then cross to take a bridleway opposite. In the field entered, turn right briefly along the right field margin to where the footpath from the main road comes in (822 702). Or (probably the easier option) continue on the gravel track to the main road and turn left for 230metres to take a footpath signed off right (822 702) (which is where the two options meet) (5.8miles). The path goes north-west from here to shortly pick up and follow the right hedge for two fields. At the bottom of the second field, turn left along the field margin for a short distance to a signed gap on the right and through, follow the right edge down. It becomes a track then a lane and is followed to a road in Hannington village. Turn left and when curving left round the church, turn right into School Lane, signed to the Village Hall.

Turn right at the Village Hall on a signed path, pass through an iron gate, go down a grassy passageway and descend (across what looks like a private garden) to cross a stream. Beyond, ascend a quarter-left to an iron gate and cross the stile ahead. Follow the right hedge until it finishes when go straight ahead to a stile. The trodden path then continues just left of straight ahead to a stile onto a track. The path continues opposite and goes straight across the field to a fence; the stile is about 16metres to the right of the bottom left diagonal corner. Beyond, go three-quarters left briefly to a stile then proceed half-right to descend to a footbridge. Beyond, follow the trodden path going right at a fork to emerge on Rectory Lane in Walgrave village. Turn left to meet a road and go straight across into Old Road. The road is now followed into Old village about a mile away; there's a pavement all the way. In Old, pass the White Horse Inn and continue on the road towards Brixworth for a short distance to a left corner and here turn right into Chapel Lane.

Almost immediately turn right on a waymarked path and go up an access drive to a walkers' gate. Through, turn left along the left side of a recreation ground to a waymarked gap in the fencing (just to the right of the swings). Now descend along the left side onto a footpath to a footbridge into a field. Go left as directed along the left hedge to shortly reach a footbridge in the corner and then a stile. Beyond, go half-right (west-of-north) to a waymarked stile and footbridge. Then proceed half-left on a cut crop path to a footbridge (carrying a maximum of 8 persons!). Go straight on following the markers along the left hedge until the hedge turns sharp left and then go straight ahead (following the waymark) to the end of a row of trees and another waymark. Go straight on, cross a track and go straight on to a marker at the end of a hedge. Follow the left hedge as directed round the wood until reaching a waymark at the end of the wood when go half-right through a cut crop path to a grass track. Cross the grass track to pass through a waymarked walkers' gate opposite and then go half-right through a small field onto an access track to the buildings at Faxton (10.4miles).

Turn left to a nearby track junction (783 753) and here turn right (northwards) to shortly reach a gate where the bridleway and byway fork. The bridleway northwards is the required route so take the left branch along the left hedge. At the bottom of the second field, turn right to a waymarked gate on the left and beyond follow the right hedge. At the field bottom, the bridleway forks and here turn left along the right hedge. After $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, when the bridleway again splits, turn right over a waymarked footbridge and then follow the left hedge along two fields and exit onto a concrete track. The bridleway continues opposite

along the right hedge and continues in the same direction to meet another concrete track. Take the cut crop path opposite which is followed out onto a lane. Turn left and shortly reach a T-junction. Turn right and after 340metres when the road curves right, turn off left onto a lane signed for Harrington. After a further ½mile the A14 is crossed. Continue and just after the 30mph sign for Harrington, turn off right on a footpath into a field. Go half-right to a farm gate onto a track and follow the track to the right to a lane. Turn left and there's a B&B shortly on the right with the village inn which serves meals just beyond.

Stage 23: Harrington to Medbourne 13.3miles, ascent 329metres (1070ft), descent 409metres (1330ft). Explorer 223 (Northampton), 233 (Leicester); Landranger 141 (Kettering).

This is a stage connecting large villages, with the chosen route running close to the Leicestershire/Northamptonshire border. From Harrington the route goes west-northwest to the village of Arthingworth (accommodation and food). Beyond, a track passing a trig point at 146metres (475ft) leads into Braybrooke village. After crossing the A6 main road, the route heads for Brampton Wood. The wood is more extensive than shown on the 1:25000 map but appears more correctly on the 1:50000 map. The route continues to the village of Weston by Welland and leaves Northamptonshire for good shortly afterwards when the River Welland is crossed. The highlight of the day now awaits in the olde worlde village of Medbourne. It is beautifully situated around the Medbourne Brook with its many attractive footbridges and old buildings. As befitting such a beauty spot, it attracts a lot of visitors and both accommodation and food are available here. Enjoy!

Route: Keep on the road past the the Tollemache Arms then pass the village pump. Just past the village hall, turn right on a signed bridleway. Follow the track along the left hedge and down an enclosed path into a field. Follow the right hedge round to a gap on the right and through, continue along the track which becomes a farm track along the left hedge. When the track turns left (to the farm), continue by the left hedge until entering a field with a stream close by on the right. Here, follow the right edge to a little bridge crossing the stream then proceed half-left to a farm gate onto a lane. Turn left, pass Arthingworth's church and immediately turn right up Oxendon Road (signed 'Village Only') which is a 'No Through Road'.

At the end of the houses, reach footpath signs and go right (northwards) on a concrete access drive leading to a stile. Follow the left hedge to a footbridge and beyond continue along the left hedge looking for a small gap on the left (two thirds of the way up). Here, swap hedge sides (waymark) and continue to a field gap. Through, go half-left keeping to the right side of a spinney and pass through a field gap on the right then (immediately) a field gap on the left. Turn right on a cut crop path north which gently diverges from the right hedge and passes a trig point just before meeting a lane (SP 748 832). Take the enclosed unsigned track opposite and after keep by the left hedge until at a sign curve right (signed for the Macmillan, Midshires and Jurassic Ways!). The farm track becomes a lane and when a road is met, turn right along Griffin Road into the main part of Braybrooke village.

At The Swan Inn turn left into School Lane (4.6miles) and when it meets a road turn right (signed 'Kettering'). After 240metres turn off left on a signed footpath (after the farm buildings on the left). Go half-right as signed along a slight embankment to a field turn and then continue down the line of the right hedge to a stile with a footbridge. Beyond turn three-quarters left to a footbridge then half-right to a fence and follow the left fence to a stile. Pass under the railway and take the overgrown path ahead to a stile into a field. Go half-right across the field to a stile in the corner and out onto a lane. The path continues

opposite. Keep to the left of the house and follow the waymarks which very shortly direct walkers left, to guide between horse tape into a field. Ascend the field just right of straight ahead to waymarks at a field gap (778 850) then go straight ahead as directed to a stile. Over, go half-right to a walkers' gate onto the main A6 road.

Cross to the walkers' entry opposite and follow an overgrown path to meet a rough stony track and turn right to a lane. Turn left for a short distance then take a footpath off right. Follow left field edges north-of-east to meet a track at the end of Hermitage Wood. Go east-northeastish across the field keeping equidistant between two telegraph poles to Brampton Wood (794 860). Turn left to follow the wood edge and then the right boundary. At the field bottom turn right briefly and look for a waymarked gate left. Pass to the left of the farm buildings named Red Hovel(!) and up the right fence to a farm gate onto a lane. Turn right towards tiny Brampton Ash village and immediately before the first buildings turn left on a signed footpath. Very shortly go left through a walkers' gate and then follow the right fence until it turns right when go just right of straight ahead to the right corner. Beyond, maintain the west-northwest direction to a farm gate just left of trees. Through, go half-left to a kissing gate onto the main A427 main road (8.3miles).

Take the path opposite left into a field and proceed left of straight ahead to just left of the field corner. Beyond, turn right and follow the right edge to the start of woodland where a waymark directs walkers half-left along the wood edge. The path then curves left to a farm gate on the right. Cross the field entered northwards (as directed) to a field gap and go up the next field along the left hedge. Exit top left into the next field and turn right (waymark) (780 893) along the right edge for two fields, following the top of the ridge. At the end of the second field, go through a narrow gap into the next field and turn left (waymark) along the left edge to a farm gate. Through, continue by the left edge for two fields with the path becoming a farm track. Don't go through the gate ahead but turn right down the left hedge to a gate. Twist left into a short track and through a farm gate turn right along the right hedge to a gate. Beyond, go straight ahead (west-of-north) towards buildings to reach a farm gate and go straight on as directed to a farm gate onto the road and turn right into Weston by Welland village.

Shortly, take the first left signed for 'Welham' and shortly at a T-junction turn left. Pass the welcoming Wheel & Compass Inn and immediately after turn right on a lane signed to Hallaton. After nearly a mile, turn off right on a signed bridleway. The track goes south-of-east through a crop to a walkers' gate (about 80metres from the right corner). It then continues straight on by a right fence and edge to meet the road into Medbourne. Turn left and keep to the 'major' road into Medbourne and shortly turn left down Waterfall Way; the Nevill Arms offers both meals and accommodation.

Stage 24: Medbourne to Oakham 14.5miles, ascent 508metres (1650ft), descent (465metres) 1510ft. Explorer 233 (Leicester), 234 (Rutland Water); Landranger 141 (Kettering).

It's advisable to pick up a sandwich at Medbourne's good and obliging village shop as there's no other refreshments available until Oakham is reached. The route uses old roads connecting Medbourne to Blaston and then Blaston to Horninghold village. Allextion is reached using a mixture of farm tracks, access drives and field paths many of which are across fields rather than following field edges; if the fields have been recently ploughed, crossing them is hard work. Rutland is entered on leaving Allextion and after nearby Belton-in-Rutland, bridleways take walkers past the old fish ponds around Leigh Lodge; you can't see much of the fish ponds and most of the bridleway in its vicinity is surfaced so

this section is not as interesting as the map suggests. There's more lane walking into Brooke followed by paths to charming Egleton at the west end of Rutland Water. Paths can then be followed to the outskirts of Oakham with its centre and railway station within easy reach; the stage end is at the station. This is a hillier stage than others as evidenced by the amount of ascent and descent.

Route: Pass the Nevill Arms on Waterfall Way and immediately turn right towards a wooden bridge over Medbourne Brook but just before the brook, turn left on a tarmac footpath beside the stream to Hallaton Road opposite the church. Turn right to a cross-road and turn left (signed Uppingham). Follow the road out of Medbourne; the village shop if required is shortly off to the left in Spring Bank. The road crosses over a disused railway and after a further 270metres go left, signed 'Blaston (field road)' (SP 802 938). The lane quickly becomes unsurfaced and the excellent track is followed to a lane on the edge of Blaston village. Turn left briefly then go right through a gate signed 'Horninghold Gated Road' and follow the surfaced gated white road northwards to meet a road. Turn right, signed 'Horninghold'. In the village take the first left and after a few metres go left again signed as a 'No Through Road' (3miles).

At the end of the road continue on the track signed 'Unsuitable for Motors'. Pass through the yard of Home Farm (805 974) to the gate ahead. Through, follow the good stony farm track and then a good path up a rise along the left hedge. Pass through a gate and follow the right fence to a gate. Beyond, follow the directional marker straight on (aim between the white house ahead and the fence on the right) to find a farm gate onto a lane (803 983). Take the farm access drive opposite. Continue just past the white house (where the track becomes unsurfaced) to a footpath sign off right signed 'Leicestershire Round'. Go a quarter-left to a post in the dip marking a field gap. Then ascend steeply a quarter-left to a seat on the hilltop with a walkers' gate visible on the left.

Through, go straight on briefly (east-northeast) to the next marker post at the beginning of a hedge and proceed up the right hedge to the field corner. Don't go through the walkers' gate but turn left (waymark) and descend the field along the right hedge to a marker post where go right to continue along the right edge until a marker post directs walkers a quarter-left to a marker post in a field gap. Go straight on in the same direction across the next field to a marker post and footbridge. In the field entered go a quarter-right on a cut crop path to a walkers' gate (aim for the end of the trees). Beyond, turn left gently diverging from the left hedge to a marker post and turn right along the left hedge to a waymark. Turn left here to follow a stone track through a small wood. The track becomes a lane. Turn right at a T-junction then pass left of Allextion's church. Keep going and meet a road. Turn left here, shortly cross a stream to enter Rutland (5.9miles) and continue to shortly reach the main A47 road; a butty van is sometimes visible to the right.

Cross to Littleworth Lane opposite right and follow the lane up into Belton-in-Rutland. Keep to the 'major' road through the village to reach the war memorial. Here, curve right into Chapel Street and continue a short distance to a four-way signpost. Take the first lane off right, signed 'Lambley Lodge' and 'No Through Road'. Follow the lane (ignoring a stony track forking off right) and when it ends go straight on (Rutland Round waymark) along a wide sandy then grass track along the left hedge to meet a good access track. Turn left briefly then go right before farm buildings at a bridleway sign. Follow the wide descending gravel track which becomes surfaced. Cross a bridge and continue to follow the surfaced lane as it ascends and twists left. Ignore a private track off right and then (almost immediately) turn right (signed) to steeply ascend on a surfaced access track. Beyond a barrier, the bridleway becomes a public road and the lane is followed to meet a road (SK

839 054) (9.5miles). Turn right to a cross-road and here turn left signed for Brooke and descend to the village.

At a sharp left bend, take the lane off right to the church and keep left of the church on the lane. At the end of the houses, the lane becomes an unsurfaced bridleway track. Shortly cross a stream and ignore a bridleway off right to Gunthorpe. When the track enters a field, go straight on along the right hedge for two fields and at the bottom of the second meet a grass track. Here, turn right onto an enclosed track. When the track enters a field follow the left edge and then the right edge in the next fields to meet a railway line. Cross with care and continue to the main A6003 road just ahead (12.1miles). Cross to the lane opposite. Follow the lane into Egleton village and turn first left down (misnamed) Main Street. Keep to the 'major' road which curves right and when a road is met go left.

Pass Egleton's church and as the lane bends right, go straight on along a signed path. Cross the field half-right to the diagonal opposite corner and then follow the right hedge until it turns right when go straight on along a trodden path to the main A6003 road. The path continues opposite along a trodden path through a crop field to the right hedge. Turn left along the hedge to a kissing gate on the right at the field bottom. Now go half-left through a field to the diagonal opposite corner and out on to a B-road. Turn right to a mini-roundabout. The route continues right to Rutland Water (on the Viking Way) but for the railway station and the start of the Viking Way turn left signed 'Town Centre'. Shortly at the next roundabout go straight on briefly before turning right into Market Place and at the top turn left to the old butter cross. Keep right of this to take a 'No Cycling' passageway and continue to the left of the church to Church Street. Take Northgate Street opposite right and follow it until it meets a road. Oakham's railway station is just to the right.